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# Northwest Territories Legislative Assembly

# Standing Committee on Social Programs

Report on the 2001-2004 Business Plan

Chair: Mr. J. Michael Miltenberger

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Northwest Territories Legislative Assembly
Standing Committee on Social Programs

## NOTICE

This document was produced by the Standing Committee on Social Programs pursuant to its review of Government of the Northwest Territories' 2001-2004 Business Plans.

This review was conducted during the period October 10 – 24, 2000, prior to the development of the 2001-2002 Main Estimates. In some respects, events may have overtaken certain references contained herein.

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Northwest Territories Legislative Assembly

Standing Committee on Social Programs

**CONFIDENTIAL**

November 15, 2000

HON. JOSEPH L. HANDLEY
GOVERNMENT HOUSE LEADER

**Report on the Review of 2000-2004 Business Plans**

On behalf of the Standing Committee on Social Programs, I am pleased to provide you with our Report on the Review of the 2001-2004 Business Plans.

We look forward to reviewing the draft Main Estimates in January, which I trust will reflect the Committees' comments and suggestions.

It is also our intention that these reports will form part of our Report to the House after First Reading of the *Appropriation Act, 2001-2002* in February.

If you have any questions or concerns, or require clarification of items or issues in our report, please do not hesitate to contact me.

J. Michael Miltenberger
Chairperson

Attachment

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# Standing Committee on Social Programs
# Report on the 2001-2004 Business Plan


*The Department of Health and Social Services* ____ *1*
- Cooperation Between the Departments in the Social Envelope ____ 1
- Forced Growth ____ 2
- Deficit Recovery Plans for the Health Boards ____ 2
- Continuing Care Strategy and Senior's Housing ____ 3
- Human Resource Considerations and the Recruitment and Retention Plan ____ 4
- Community Expectations of the Healthcare System ____ 5
- Non-Insured Health Benefits ____ 6
- Strategies for Children ____ 6
- Primary Care Model ____ 7
- Delivery of Health and Social Services in the Deh Cho Riding ____ 8
- Mobile Addictions Strategy ____ 8
- Department Strategies ____ 9
- Ten New Social Workers for the Northwest Territories ____ 9
- Legislative Initiatives ____ 10
- Accountability Frameworks ____ 10
- Information Technology Concerns ____ 11
- Performance, Measures and Targets ____ 12
- Child Advocate ____ 13
- Human Resources ____ 13
- Medical Travel Policy ____ 14

*Department of Justice* ____ *14*
- Forced Growth ____ 14
- Probation Services ____ 15
- Community Constable Program ____ 15
- Human Resources ____ 16
- Reductions to Program Dollars ____ 17
- Performance Measures and Targets ____ 17
- Wilderness Camps ____ 17
- Capping the Police Service Agreement for the Next Three Years ____ 18
- Department Goals ____ 18
- Legal Services Board ____ 18
- Sentencing Patterns for Young Offenders ____ 19
- Human Rights Legislation ____ 20

*Department of Education, Culture and Employment.* ____ *20*
- Presentation of Strategies in the Business Plans ____ 20
- Cooperation Between the Social Envelope and Other Departments ____ 21
- Digital Communications Network ____ 21
- Reductions to Income Support ____ 22
- Aboriginal Languages Strategy ____ 23
- Department Targets ____ 23
- Student Needs Assessment ____ 24
- Children's Initiatives ____ 24
- Northwest Territories Literacy Strategy ____ 25
- Human Resource Committee on Non-Renewable Resource Employment ____ 26
- A Human Resource Development Proposal related to Non-Renewable Resources in the Northwest Territories ____ 26
- Maximizing Northern Employment ____ 27
- Forced Growth ____ 27
- Student Financial Assistance Program ____ 27
- Informatics Plan ____ 28

Distance Learning Opportunities ____ 28

***The Northwest Territories Housing Corporation*** ____ ***29***

Program and Function Review ____ 29
Marketing of NWT Housing Products ____ 29
Energy Wall and Building Products Ltd. ____ 30
Housing Stock Condition in the Communities ____ 30
Human Resources ____ 30
Senior's Housing Strategy ____ 31
Cooperation Between Ministers in the Social Envelope ____ 31
Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation Funding ____ 32
Linking of District Offices and the Local Housing Authorities through a Wide Area Network ____ 32
Strategies and Initiatives ____ 32
Energy Conservation Policy ____ 33
Joint Ventures with Aboriginal Development Corporations ____ 33
Harmonization Strategy ____ 33

# Standing Committee on Social Programs
# Report on the 2001-2004 Business Plan

## Introduction

The Standing Committee on Social Programs met from Wednesday, October 11, 2000 to Thursday, October 19, 2000 to review the 2001-2004 Business Plans. The Social Programs envelope includes the following Departments and Corporations: the Department of Health and Social Services, the Department of Justice, the Department of Education, Culture and Employment and the Northwest Territories Housing Corporation. The Committee would like to take this opportunity to acknowledge the hard work by the department and legislative committee staff.

## The Department of Health and Social Services

The Standing Committee on Social Programs met with the Minister and her officials on Wednesday October 11th and again on Thursday October 12th, 2000 to discuss the 2001/2004 Business Plans for the Department of Health and Social Services. Wide-ranging discussions were held on the content of the Business Plan and on the future direction of the Department of Health and Social Services. The Committee would like to take this opportunity to thank the Minister and her officials for the frank and open discussions that occurred. The Committee is especially interested in the development of a new governance structure to deliver health and social services to the communities and look forward to being kept apprised of the Department's plans. The following is a summary of the issues of concern to the Committee.

### *Cooperation Between the Departments in the Social Envelope*

The Standing Committee on Social Programs has noted many instances during the review of the Business Plan that point to a lack of cooperation between the Departments in the Social Envelope.

While the Ministers and Department Officials maintain that cooperation between the Departments is an intrinsic part of the ongoing work of the Departments in the Social Envelope, Committee Members saw little evidence of this cooperation reflected in the Business Plan. For example, the division of labour and responsibilities for the implementation of joint strategies such as the Early Childhood Development Action Plan are not clearly articulated in the Business Plan.

In the case of the "bundling" of Seniors Programs the Minister Responsible for the Northwest Territories Housing Corporation admitted that there had been no meeting with his counterparts in the Social Envelope as of yet. Committee Members fail to understand how a fundamental shift in the delivery of services to seniors, that senior's themselves want, could be accomplished without direction from the Ministers who are responsible for the delivery of these programs. Members are also concerned about the role of the Minister Responsible for Seniors.

Further examples highlighting the lack of cooperation between the Departments in the Social Envelope will be brought forward in this report.

***Forced Growth***

The Standing Committee notes that the Department of Health and Social Services did not provide any numbers on forced growth for the second and third year of the Business Plan. It was learned during the review of another Department in the Social Envelope that this lack of detail was on the instruction of the Financial Management Board Secretariat.

The lack of any forced growth projections for the second and third year of the Business Plan causes the Committee to question whether there is any meaningful forward planning going on in the Department. For example, can the healthcare facilities in the Delta and the Deh Cho handle the projected economic boom in the areas?

It is important to note that the Business Plans are planning documents. Ignoring forced growth as an issue will not mean that it goes away. Members deserve to be kept informed as to the best case and worst case scenarios affecting the Department.

***Deficit Recovery Plans for the Health Boards***

Committee Members were very concerned about the present debt load being carried by four of the nine Health Boards in the Northwest Territories. The discussions with the Minister indicate that Deficit Recovery Plans for the Boards have been developed and have been or are in the process of being sent to the Department for analysis.

The Committee noted the furor that surrounded the proposed changes to the Stanton Regional Hospital Surgical Ward indicated a lack of consultation with stakeholders. This is not acceptable. For any Deficit Recovery Plan to work there must be buy in and participation by the people affected by the Plan.

The imposition of fundamental changes to the way a Health Board operates, without the participation of health care professionals and other stakeholders, indicates a lack of respect and could have implications for future recruitment and retention efforts.

The Committee notes that the Stanton Board announced on October 31, 2000 that it no longer contemplates the amalgamation of the surgical and pediatric wards in response to concerns from healthcare professionals and the public. The Standing Committee on Social Programs considers the failure to consult with stakeholders a major omission by the Stanton Regional Board.

For residents of the Northwest Territories to take ownership of, and deal with their personal health care and social issues, there must be buy in to the delivery process. Change that is effected by edict or proclamations by a Board headquartered in another community will not inspire confidence at the local level. The Committee would like to see the Department ensure in their review of Deficit Recovery Plans that, in addition to ensuring minimum service delivery programs are maintained, there is a consultation process involving staff and the general public.

***Continuing Care Strategy and Senior's Housing***

The Committee is concerned that the Continuing Care Strategy has not been finalized. Of particular concern to Members is the lack of a territorial strategy on Extended Care. Without a strategy the Members fail to see how they can offer meaningful comment on proposed closures in some communities and new beds in others. Committee Members fail to understand how the Department can be proposing bed closures and openings in the absence of a territorial-wide plan.

There is also trepidation on the part of Committee Members that the closure of extended care beds could result in increased costs to home care services and thus no true savings would be realized. Committee Members strongly believe that cost-savings in one area cannot become a forced growth issue in another program area. The Department is asked to consider this in the finalization of its Continuing Care Strategy and to monitor if necessary.

Committee Members were very disappointed to learn of the "apparent rift" between the Department of Health and Social Services and the Northwest Territories Housing Corporation on the placement of senior's independent housing units in the Northwest Territories. The unilateral decision of the Northwest Territories Housing Corporation to proceed with the construction of senior's housing without input from the Department of Health and Social Services could have serious implications in the future.

There is a definite need to consider the information contained in the Housing Needs Survey conducted by the NWT Housing Corporation in conjunction with the information on healthcare status that can be provided by the Health and Social Service Boards. Without this cooperation, Committee Members are convinced that no true understanding of community needs for senior's housing can be realized. For example, the Housing Needs Survey can indicate that there are twenty seniors requiring housing in a community, however, without the input from the Health Board Committee Members must question how relevant planning can take place.

The Standing Committee on Social Programs remains unclear on the role of the Minister Responsible for Seniors and will be pursuing clarification in another venue.

Committee Members recognize the frustration of the Minister and her Department with the unilateral actions of the Northwest Territories Housing Corporation and the fact that the Department of Health and Social Services will have no opportunity to provide input on the placement of seniors independent housing for the next three years.

The Committee will raise this issue with the Northwest Territories Housing Corporation. The Committee appreciated the candor of the Minister and her officials in dealing with this divisive issue.

***Human Resource Considerations and the Recruitment and Retention Plan***

The Members thank the Minister for the information that has been provided thus far on the Recruitment and Retention Plan. As promised a more extensive information request dated October 27, 2000, has been forwarded to the Minister.

Members believe that there is a need to develop criteria to measure the success of the Recruitment and Retention Plan and that any successes and failures must be communicated in the Business Plan.

For example, the Members of the Standing Committee who represent smaller communities see little evidence that nursing careers and educational requirements are being promoted to their constituents. There is also a requirement to train lay dispensers in those communities that either do not have a health centre or are between nurses. The Committee would like to see all communities at least have a lay dispenser.

The need for centralized coordination of the recruitment and retention effort cannot be emphasized enough. The Committee was pleased to hear that the Department sees this as their role. However, Members were distressed to hear that on several occasions the Departmental Recruitment and Retention personnel had their efforts duplicated by individual Boards at southern trade

shows. This results in a waste of effort and funding by both parties and creates a competitive environment for the recruitment of healthcare and social service professionals. This is not acceptable to Committee Members. It is hoped that the Department's efforts to end this practice are successful and that there will be greater cooperation between the Boards and the central recruitment and retention function of the Department.

Committee Members have heard that there has been a steady turnover in the staff of the Recruitment and Retention Unit. It is hoped that this situation has stabilized and that continuity in delivery of the Recruitment and Retention Plan has been achieved. The Committee will monitor this and expect a status update during the review of the Main Estimates.

***Training and Education Leave for Nurses***

The Standing Committee on Social Programs is convinced that there needs to be better coordination between the Department of Health and Social Services and the Department of Education, Culture and Employment's Student Financial Assistance Program.

This coordination needs to be reflected in the Recruitment and Retention Plan and communicated to all healthcare professionals and social workers in the Northwest Territories. Members are aware that there are several different "pots" of training money within the Department of Health and Social Services, with just as many different application processes. Access to further training should be a simple, straightforward process. The Recruitment and Retention professionals should, at the very least, be cognizant of all available funding sources and the procedures for applying for education or training leave.

The Committee noted that the Department of Health and Social Services was aware of the concern that the failure of the Student Financial Assistance Program to adequately address the need for grandfathering provisions had impacted on the ability of long-term northerners to enter or complete healthcare or social service studies. It is hoped that the Minister's officials have had time to brief her on this issue and that the Department's concerns have been transmitted to the Minister of Education, Culture and Employment.

***Community Expectations of the Healthcare System***

An area related to recruitment and retention that the Committee believes overlooked is the entire issue of community expectations from our health and social service professionals. Members are aware that in some communities' unrealistic expectations of the healthcare professionals contributes to nurse "burnout" and thus leads to increased turnover. Cultural sensitivity training and introducing a new practitioner to the community, should also be an opportunity to gauge community expectations. Residents have to understand that outside of

Healthcare Centre hours it should be a "true" emergency before disturbing an overworked nurse during their off hours. The Standing Committee on Social Programs believes that there is a need to educate the communities on the roles and responsibilities of the nurses in their communities. If residents understood the true workload of the nurses perhaps there would be a decrease in the number of non-emergency cases requiring the nurse's attention outside of business hours. The Department, in consultation with the Health Boards, is strongly encouraged to develop a communication protocol that opens a meaningful dialogue between the nurses and the communities that they serve.

***Non-Insured Health Benefits***

The Standing Committee on Social Programs recognizes that we are the only government that is delivering this program on behalf of the Federal Government. Committee Members are leery of the planned return of responsibility for this program to the Federal Government that is proposed in the Program and Function Review.

The Committee realizes that the proposed return is the GNWT's opening negotiation position in having the Federal Government live up to their fiduciary responsibilities to status aboriginal people. Committee Members believe that this must be communicated to the Aboriginal Governments and that contingency plans must be developed that provide for a seamless transition between the territorial and federal governments administering of the program if it comes to that.

Aboriginal Governments must be made to understand that it is the Federal Government that is not living up to its fiduciary responsibility and that the Territorial Government is not abandoning them.

Committee Members are very concerned that if the Non-Insured Health Benefits program is repatriated to the Federal Government that the Metis Health Benefit would end.

***Strategies for Children***

Members of the Standing Committee on Social Programs are aware of the Department's plan to spend nearly $8.0 million over the next three years on the Children and Youth Strategy. It appears to Committee Members that this strategy will continue to evolve with no clear targets or outcomes set in the near future. The Committee's major concern is with the creation of new strategies before the previous strategies are completed or implemented.

When looked at in conjunction with the Early Childhood Development Action Plan that is presently stalled because of funding issues it becomes apparent that the chances of significant improvement in the lot of NWT children in the first year of this Business Plan is non-existent.

Committee Members are also concerned about the apparent lack of coordination between the Departments on the Early Childhood Development Action Plan. While it is realized that the "Action Plan" is in its earliest stages of development, Committee Members got no sense of "common purpose" from the Departments involved.

When, and if the funding comes available from the Federal Government to implement this program, the Standing Committee on Social Programs expects to see greater evidence of cooperation between the Department of Health and Social Services and the Department of Education, Culture and Employment.

***Primary Care Model***

There is a high expectation that the implementation of the Primary Care Model will alleviate strain on the healthcare system. Committee Members believe that there is an opportunity to reduce costs and improve services to the residents of the Northwest Territories if the Primary Care Model is adopted.

However, for the Primary Care Model to be successful there must be buy-in from the healthcare professionals and from the general public. It is not clear to Committee Members how successful the Department has been in garnering this support. Indeed, Committee Members are unaware of any framework that definitively outlines how the Primary Care Model works and how it will affect the delivery of healthcare to residents.

Members of the Committee are concerned that the nursing education programs that are, or will be offered in the North, will not be up to the task of staffing an Primary Care Model with competent, well-trained nurses that have the necessary skills to meet the many challenges they will face. The Committee will be requesting further information under separate cover.

The Department has used $2.8 million from the Canada Health and Social Transfer Trust to stabilize Doctor's salaries and is including this as part of the requirements for the Primary Care Model to work. The Committee, however, could not attach a dollar figure to the costs of developing a practical Primary Care Model. This causes the Members of the Committee to question when the model will be up and running in the Northwest Territories.

Committee Members believe that this points to a need to establish and communicate time-lines to the healthcare professionals and the general public on when they can expect to see a workable Primary Care Model in place and what if any opportunity they will have to comment on the final model.

***Delivery of Health and Social Services in the Deh Cho Riding***

The residents of Fort Providence and Kakisa continue to have issues with the delivery of health and social programs in their communities. Administratively, the communities are considered part of the Deh Cho Health and Social Service Board. However, the residents of these communities have the bulk of their health and social service needs met by professionals operating in and out of Hay River.

This creates a gap in service because the administrative unit does not match the actual practice in the communities. Building a facility in Fort Simpson, be it a hospital or a long-term care facility does not benefit the residents of Fort Providence or Kakisa. They do not go there. It is closer and cheaper to access service in Hay River. But yet, the people of Fort Providence and Kakisa are included in the catchment area that is used to justify the budget for the Deh Cho Health and Social Service Board.

Members of the Committee have heard that the Chiefs and Aboriginal Governments in these communities never supported the creation of the Deh Cho Health Board and have always wanted control of health and social services to be vested in existing aboriginal government structures.

There is a clear need for consultation with these communities as part of the Board and Governance Reform Initiative. The Committee will be looking for evidence of this consultation when we again meet to discuss the Main Estimates in the spring.

***Mobile Addictions Strategy***

Committee Members are concerned that the Mobile Addictions Strategy is an ad-hoc, piecemeal attempt to mitigate the effects of the overdue Mental Health and Addictions Strategy. Members are also concerned that the Department is promoting the Mobile Addictions Strategy in order to justify no new bed space for residential treatment programs. The Committee would like to make it clear to the Department that while it remains to be seen whether the Mobile Addictions Treatment Program is effective, further cuts to residential treatment programs are not acceptable.

The Mobile Addictions Strategy may be a cheaper way of delivering programs to the residents of the Northwest Territories, and may also be a way of concentrating on the addictions needs of women and children but should not replace residential addictions programs.

***Department Strategies***

The Department initially introduced their six major strategies/initiatives in 1999/2000 Business Plan. In 2000/2001 the Mental Health Strategy was amended to become the Mental Health and Addiction Strategy. In the last Business Plan the Committee counted seven "mini strategies or initiatives" that were being introduced to support the six major strategies. Some, such as the Territorial Tobacco Strategy and the Territorial Injury Prevention Strategy were not mentioned in this year's Business Plan (2001/2002) causing Members to question whether the strategies are ongoing or not.

Others, like the Alternative Programming Initiative have been rolled into another Initiative or Strategy. (The Committee assumes that Alternative Programming Initiative exists as the Mobile Addictions Strategy)

In the 2000/2001 Business Plan the Department of Health and Social Services stressed the joint initiative with the Department of Education, Culture and Employment on the development of the nurse practitioner and on nursing education in the Northwest Territories. That link is not stressed in the 2001/2002 Business Plan causing Committee Members to question whether the cooperation between the two Departments on nursing is ongoing.

Members of the Standing Committee on Social Programs are disappointed in the lack of continuity in the formulating and presentation of strategies. As one component of a major strategy is completed or has a "mini-strategy" put in place it disappears from the next Business Plan. This makes it hard for the Committee Members and staff to track the Department's progress on a year to year basis.

***Ten New Social Workers for the Northwest Territories***

The Standing Committee on Social Programs views the hiring of the ten new social workers as a positive first step in implementing the recommendations made in the Child Welfare League Report "It Takes a Community".

The Members were also pleased to hear that the Cabinet had directed the Department to hire northerners for these positions as a condition of their approving the ten new social workers. However, the Committee must note that these ten new social workers constitute less than half of the minimum twenty-two required social workers recommended in "It Takes a Community".

Committee Members believe that children in care are one of the most important functions that the Department of Health and Social Services undertakes. Should the Department do a poor job, and fail the children who need our protection the consequences can be tragic. The costs of placement of Children in Care in southern institutions are prohibitive and should be avoided if at all possible. Committee Members do realize that some circumstances that are beyond the capability of any facility in the Northwest Territories and that some children will be in care in southern facilities.

***Legislative Initiatives***

During the discussions surrounding the Business Plan the Department admitted that most of the twenty-seven pieces of legislation that the Department is responsible for are severely out of date.

The Standing Committee on Social Programs notes the opposition to a Unified Healthcare Professions Act. If unanimity of the various groups of healthcare professionals cannot be achieved, the Department would be advised to let it drop.

The Committee looks forward to amendments to the *Nursing Act*, the *Adoptions Act* and the *Child and Family Service Act* in the near future. The Committee understands that major work is required on the *Public Health Act* and that the issue of Palliative Care and the issue of "right to die" must be dealt with.

The Committee wishes to point out that new legislative initiatives must be balanced against the need to finish work on initiatives or strategies that are already underway. There is a perceived need for the Department and indeed all Departments in the Social Envelope to set priorities and see them through to completion. The Standing Committee on Social Programs would like to see a legislative agenda for the Department of Health and Social Services that outlines the time line that the Department envisions to deal with the out of date legislation that the Department is responsible for.

***Accountability Frameworks***

Members of the Standing Committee on Social Programs are extremely concerned about the development of workable accountability frameworks at the Board, Program and Clinical levels. The Committee looks forward to seeing these accountability frameworks once they are developed.

The Committee is of the opinion that no matter how "good" the standards that are included as part of any accountability framework, they are useless without the ability to monitor said compliance.

The Department has admitted limited ability to ensure compliance with any accountability framework that is developed for the Boards, Programs or in Clinical Services. This is not acceptable to the Standing Committee on Social Programs. If the Department does not have a true picture of how programs and clinical services are being delivered in our communities there is no way that corrective action can be taken before an issue becomes a life or death situation.

Members of the Committee would like to remind the Department that as self-government agreements are negotiated, the role of the Department and the Boards could move from that of a service provider to that of a monitoring agency. The Standing Committee on Social Programs must insist that the Department have a minimum number of qualified persons on staff to monitor program and clinical standards.

***Information Technology Concerns***

The Committee makes note of the plan to combine government-wide purchasing of computer equipment contained in the functional and program review. There was discussion at the Committee level of recommending that the Department expand the role of the "hot swap" computer inventory to allow the Boards access for administrative computers also. Savings would then be passed onto the Boards with minimum effort on the part of the Department. The Standing Committee on Social Programs looks forward to further information on the proposed combining of computer purchases and will be extremely disappointed if the Health and Social Service Boards, as well as the Education Boards do not have an opportunity to participate in the program.

PeopleSoft Program

Members of the Committee are frustrated that the PeopleSoft Program has not met expectations. Of particular concern is the inability of any other Board to use the system outside of Yellowknife. The PeopleSoft system was sold to MLAs in the 13th Assembly because it promised to make the collection of important statistical information easier to do.

Members are aware that PeopleSoft is unsuited to the collection of affirmative action statistics and that the majority of statistics have to be compiled manually. The Committee is also aware that if the PeopleSoft program is being used to enter financial information that other areas of the program cannot be accessed until the entering of the financial information is complete. The Committee must question whether all of the information requirements of the Legislative Assembly and Government were taken into account when the PeopleSoft program was being adapted for use by the GNWT.

When it is ascertained that a significant portion of the civil service of the Northwest Territories are still being tracked manually and by antiquated software, the Committee becomes concerned. The Committee remains unclear why Boards and Agencies outside of Yellowknife cannot use the PeopleSoft system to meet their human resource administration needs.

Common Computer Platforms

Committee Members again point to a lack of cooperation between Departments when it comes to shared computer systems to administer strategies for which more than one Department has responsibility.

Even though the Early Childhood Development Action Plan is stalled awaiting news of federal funding, there was absolutely no mention in the Business Plan of the need for a shared system. Members are convinced there are savings to be realized.

E-Mail Systems

The Standing Committee was pleased to hear that the Department is moving away from its own e-mail system to using the same platform as the rest of the government departments use. There are savings in licensing agreements that can be made here and it is hoped that this will also be examined in the program and function review.

***Performance, Measures and Targets***

Committee Members some improvement over the information presented in the last Business Plan. While pleased, Committee Members do note the need for further refinements and the requirement to develop the promised baseline information during the upcoming fiscal year.

Members of the Standing Committee notes that the Department's practice of dropping targets from the Business Plans in subsequent years makes it virtually impossible for the Members to track incremental success.

The targets set for some programs are so long-term that it will be the Members of the next Assembly that will be determining whether the Department was successful in meeting their goal. The Committee notes the lack of targets for Tobacco Reduction as an example of the dropping of a target in subsequent Business Plan and the setting of a long-term target. The Members of the Standing Committee on Social Programs wish to see targets restated in each subsequent Business Plan in order to ensure that proper tracking is taking place.

The Committee looks forward to reviewing whether the Department of Health and Social Services was successful in meeting its targets in the Mid-Year Activity Report.

***Child Advocate***

Several Members of the Standing Committee on Social Services have had a belief in the need for a Child Advocate going back to the last Assembly. Indeed, some Members of the 12th Assembly recommended the establishment of such a position.

There is still a perception in some of our smaller communities that children end up in government care without due process and with no mechanisms for the family to challenge a social worker's decision. An independent Children's Advocate could provide families with a sense that someone outside of government is willing to fight for their rights as well as those of their child.

Members of the Standing Committee believe that the creation of the Office of the Children's Advocate is a cost-effective way of protecting the rights of children in care and the rights of their families.

***Human Resources***

The Standing Committee again notes the lack of information provided in the Human Resources Appendix. The Committee would like to see a standard reporting function developed and followed by all Departments. In particular the Committee would like to see information on the percentage of Performance Appraisals that have been completed in the last year; the number of exit interviews that were conducted and their results and the number of turnovers in the Department.

It is realized that the Department will have some difficulty in getting some Boards to hold up their end and actually do the appraisals and exit interviews. However, it is a strongly held conviction of Committee Members that without adequate information on staffing positive changes cannot be effected. The Committee also questions the lack of a clear linkage to the Recruitment and Retention Plan. Relevant information is critical to adjusting the Recruitment and Retention Plan to meet the Department's needs.

The Standing Committee was also disappointed in the presentation of the Department's Affirmative Action statistics. The Affirmative Action statistics were presented in a narrative form that was short on hard numbers and facts. Committee Members would be satisfied with a table format in presenting statistics.

The information was also presented in too broad of a format for Committee Members to get any understanding of affirmative action statistics by actual job performed or location. It may be all right to place all tradepersons in a single catchall category but lumping all "front-line workers" together is not acceptable to Committee Members. The information also needs to be presented by community as opposed to by Board. It must be remembered that MLA's constituencies are not always the same as the administrative units established by government.

***Medical Travel Policy***

It was noted in the last Main Estimate Review that there needed to be a method for residents of our smaller communities, who were refused medical travel, that have had these complaints borne out by a second opinion to have their medical travel costs reimbursed. There is also the whole issue of establishing a policy or process that deals with reimbursing residents of communities without a medical practitioner, who travel to another community for medical treatment.

The Minister had agreed that this medical travel problem needed to be dealt with. To date the Committee is unaware of any progress on this issue and is mentioning it in this Report to keep the Department's attention.

## Department of Justice

The Standing Committee on Social Programs met with the Minister and his officials to discuss the 2001/2004 Business Plans for the Department of Justice on October 13, 2000. Wide-ranging discussions on a myriad of issues occurred and the Committee appreciated the candor of the Minister and his officials in presenting the Business Plan. There are, however, several comments and concerns that the Committee wishes to bring to the attention of the Department.

***Forced Growth***

The Committee Members noted that except for forced growth in the Department of Education, Culture and Employment's Business Plan because of legislated requirements, the other Departments in the Social Envelop were projecting no forced growth in the second and third year of the Business Plans.

Members appreciated the candor of the Minister in admitting that the nondisclosure of forced growth in the second and third years of the Business Plan was on instructions of the Financial Management Board Secretariat.

It must be pointed out by Committee Members that in reality the failure to present second and third year forced growth projections has effectively rendered the Business Plan a one year plan as opposed to the three year Business Plan that it purports to be.

Members also believe that without a true understanding of the pressures and strains on each of the Departments, Members will be hard-pressed to make the tough decisions when called upon to do so by the Government in the absence of proper information.

The Standing Committee would like clarification of why projected forced growth for the second and third years of the Business Plans is not included.

***Probation Services***

Members of the Standing Committee were surprised to hear that there was the possibility that supervision contracts would be let in some of our communities that the Department felt were too small to warrant a permanent probation officer position.

This was the first that the Committee had heard of this program. Members would like to ask that if the Department is going to fundamentally change the way in which a program is being delivered that the Members of the Assembly be informed.

Regardless of the concerns the Committee has about the way they found out about the possibilities for supervision contracts, it is realized that this could be a win-win situation for communities and the Department. However, the Committee does have a concern of how the supervision contracts will be awarded and seek clarification on that point.

Communities without probation officers need to be made aware that this option exists and be provided with the support to take on the responsibility. The RCMP already has enough responsibilities and supervision contracts should not be downloaded to them.

Committee Members look forward to an update on the Department's progress during the review of the Main Estimates.

***Community Constable Program***

The Members of the Standing Committee were disappointed to hear that there are problems in renegotiating the funding from the federal government for this program. The Department is encouraged to continue pursuing this funding as well as pursuing the expansion the program and increasing the level of financing with the Federal Solicitor General. Committee Members note that there is only five months left to negotiate this funding arrangement.

The Members of the Standing Committee on Social Programs believe that the need for more police resources is there. Our present policing system is so stretched that it has no choice but to concentrate on reaction rather than prevention.

Members point to the success of the policing program in Fort MacPherson sponsored by Human Resources and Development Canada in reducing juvenile crime as an example of what proactive policing can accomplish in a very short period of time. Members are concerned that the expiry of the funding agreement will lead to a return to criminal behavior on the part of young people in a very short period of time. Committee Members believe that the success of this program points to the need for community policing in the Northwest Territories. Communities have to become involved with their police and work together to conquer the community's societal ills.

The crime rate in the Northwest Territories will not improve without the ability of the Police to participate as opposed to react.

***Human Resources***

The Standing Committee again points to the lack of numbers on the number of performance appraisals that were conducted in the previous year; the number of exit interviews that were conducted and any trends that were noted, and the number of direct appointments or transfer assignments that were used to develop a representative workforce.

Members are still disappointed by the lack of success that the Department has realized in Affirmative Action at the Headquarters level, particularly in the Corrections Division.

Members were pleased to hear the Minister commit to the development of a formal plan to address the need for a representative workforce at the Headquarters level. The development of this plan is long overdue. The Committee notes that in the additional information provided the "Department has placed a high priority in developing more detailed and structured human resource action plans..." and that " the Department has asked all Divisions to identify aboriginal candidates for advancement."

The Committee looks forward to reviewing progress on these "more detailed and structured human resource plans" over the course of the winter.

### *Reductions to Program Dollars*

Members are concerned that in re-profiling funding to meet internal requirements, program delivery will suffer. At some point the ability of a Department to re-profile resources to meet new program requirements is maximized and program delivery must suffer.

The Department's response to the information request made by the Committee does little to assuage Member's beliefs that program delivery must at some point suffer because of program re-profiling.

There is also the question that if funding can be found for required programs on a regular basis without compromising program delivery, is there any veracity to the numbers that the Legislative Assembly approves for each activity.

Members of the Standing Committee on Social Programs cite the 40% ($191,000) reduction for Administration under the Registries and Court Services Activity, to cover off the Dental Premium shortfall, as an example of Committee's concern with the financial figures that they approve. Administration costs went from $480,000 to $289,000 per year in just under four months. (Since the last Main Estimate Review) The Committee must then question what the Department did with the surplus under this activity last year?

Members note that in a subsequent reply to a request for information made by the Committee, the Department stated they would be monitoring this situation to ensure that program delivery will not suffer because of any reductions. The Committee will also be monitoring this situation.

### *Performance Measures and Targets*

The Committee noted improvements under some programs in providing targets to measure progress. The Committee looks forward to the establishment of further baseline information and examining the results in the relevant Mid-Year Activity Report.

### *Wilderness Camps*

The Members of the Standing Committee on Social Programs note that a report on Wilderness Camps was promised for September of this year. To date the Members of the Committee have yet to see Phase One of this Report as promised during the Business Plan Review. The failure of the Department to include this Report with the rest of the additional information causes the Committee to question whether appropriate resources were put into producing the Report on a timely basis.

It must also be noted that Committee Members continue to receive conflicting reports on the Wilderness Camp Program. Some Inmates have been told that they would be suitable candidates to spend time in a Wilderness Camp setting but that the Correctional Centre did not have the funds to send them. Members had understood that it was cheaper to place Inmates in a Wilderness Camp as opposed to incarceration in a Correctional Facility. If this is true are Inmates being kept in facilities to justify budgets?

The Department has to be aware that many of these camps are struggling to survive and that they must deal with the issues as soon as possible. Committee Members will continue to monitor this situation and look forward to the second phase of the Report in December.

***Capping the Police Service Agreement for the Next Three Years***

The Committee is very concerned about the plans contained in the Program and Function Review to cap the Police Services Agreement for the next three years. The Department or the RCMP in Attachment 5 of the Program and Functional Review has not addressed the impact of a cap on our smaller communities. For example if the business study underway on one and two member detachments recommends withdrawal from communities unless more resources are made available what will the government do?

As mentioned previously in this Report, policing in the Northwest Territories is already stretched to the limits. Further service reductions because of the RCMP having to meet Government of the Northwest Territories imposed restrictions are not acceptable to Committee Members. Even the Government's own analysis of capping the Police Services Agreement recognizes that the RCMP may be forced to reduce services.

***Department Goals***

Committee Members noted with some interest that the Department's Core Businesses could be related to one of the Department's Goals with the exception of the provision of legal services to the Government of the Northwest Territories. Committee Members strongly believe that if an Activity is identified as a Core Business there should be Goals attached to that Activity. The Department is encouraged to develop a realistic Goal for the provision of legal services to the Government of the Northwest Territories.

***Legal Services Board***

There was no mention made during the review of the last Business Plans of the decision of the Legal Services Board to hire two additional staff lawyers to deal with the family law backlog for legal aid clients.

Committee Members are concerned that a government appointed board operating with no legislative oversight could hire highly paid professionals. Members of the Committee were aware that the situation required action but are bewildered as to why we were not informed that the Legal Services Board had such latitude to deal with the crisis. Indeed, Committee Members must question whether the situation needed to reach crisis proportions, given the wide latitude that the Legal Services Board had in dealing with the problem.

It is noted that the Board arrangement gives the Board plenty of leeway to deal with their problems. It also gives the Department plenty of leeway to distance themselves from any decision that the Legal Services Board makes. The Committee points out that any other Department would have to appear before Legislative Assembly with a Supplementary Appropriation to hire two new staff.

Committee Members note there is a difference between assigning cases and clearing cases and will continue to monitor this situation. The Committee sincerely hopes that there is not a Supplementary Appropriation in the offing because of the hiring of the two new staff lawyers for the Legal Services Board.

***Sentencing Patterns for Young Offenders***

Committee Members are concerned that no sentencing patterns can be identified for young offenders. There seems to be the ability to do this for the adult offenders but not for the young offenders. The crisis in the number of incarcerated young offenders identified in the last Business Plan review no longer exists and the Department cannot explain this "blip".

The inability of the Department to explain the swings in the number of incarcerated young offenders causes the Committee to question the quality of the information that would be presented on the need for the construction of future Young Offender Facilities.

The Members of the Standing Committee on Social Programs believes that there is merit to examining the sentencing patterns for young offenders – including the sentencing patterns for individual judges. The Committee is not implying that the Department should in anyway interfere in the judicial process. However, there is a strong belief on the part of Committee Members that the Department requires realistic information on sentencing patterns in order to do proper forward planning.

***Human Rights Legislation***

The Standing Committee notes that the Department plans to implement and do the consultation on this important and major piece of legislation from within the budget of the Legislation Division. Other Departments provide Committees with information on how much the implementation/consultation process will cost for major legislation. A major legislative Initiative such as Human Rights Legislation should be relate to a Department Goal; stand-alone as part of the budget and provide detail in the Business Plan as to the implementation and consultation process. Committee Members would like to see the Department of Justice adhere to the practice of other Departments in the future.

## Department of Education, Culture and Employment.

The Standing Committee on Social Programs met with the Minister and his officials on October 17th and 18th, 2000 to review the 2001/2004 Business Plans for the Department of Education, Culture and Employment. A wide-ranging discussion was held on the content of the Business Plan, as well as on other issues relating to the Department, that are of interest to Committee Members. The concerns of the Members of the Committee are summarized as follows.

***Presentation of Strategies in the Business Plans***

This is an issue that is not particular to the Department of Education, Culture and Employment. At least three strategies: the Human Resources Strategy related to Non-Renewable Resources; the Maximizing Northern Employment Strategy and the Early Childhood Development Action Plan are presented in the Department's Business Plan without adequate fiscal resources to implement them.

The Standing Committee is not opposed to having this type of information presented to them during the Business Plan review. Indeed, this is precisely the venue that this type of information should be presented for Standing Committee review. However, to include "wish list" strategies alongside strategies that have the necessary fiscal resources attached to them can be confusing to the reader of these documents.

The Standing Committee would like to recommend that the Department present those strategies whose implementation is dependent on accessing funding outside the control of the Government of the Northwest Territories as a separate appendix to the Business Plan.

The Members also note that the Department is now presenting its strategies in a manner comparable to the other Departments. This makes it easier for Committee Members and staff to analyze. It is hoped that the Department will remain consistent in its reporting from here on in.

***Cooperation Between the Social Envelope and Other Departments***

The Standing Committee on Social Programs has noted many instances during the review of the Business Plan that point to a lack of cooperation between the Departments in the Social Envelope.

While the Ministers and Department Officials maintain that cooperation between the Departments is an intrinsic part of the ongoing work of the Departments in the Social Envelope, Committee Members saw little evidence of this cooperation reflected in the Business Plan or in our discussions with the Ministers.

For example the division of labour and responsibilities for the implementation of joint strategies such as the Early Childhood Development Action Plan are not clearly articulated in the Business Plan. In the case of the harmonization of the Seniors Programs the Minister Responsible for the Northwest Territories Housing Corporation admitted that there had been no meeting with his counterparts in the Social Envelop as of yet. Committee Members fail to understand how a fundamental shift in the delivery of services to seniors could be accomplished without direction from the Ministers who are responsible for the delivery of these programs or without input from the Minister Responsible for Seniors.

Further examples highlighting the lack of cooperation between the Departments in the Social Envelop will be brought forward in this report.

Members are also aware that the Northwest Territories Development Corporation believes that many of their subsidiaries are in fact operate to subsidize the income support program and should be treated as such. The Department of Education, Culture and Employment states it is aware of this and maintains that it has an excellent working relationship with the Department of Resources, Wildlife and Economic Development. How this relates to subsidiaries of the Northwest Territories Development Corporation providing subsidies as income support, without the promise of return on investment, remains unclear to Committee Members. The Committee would like to see stronger evidence of cooperation.

***Digital Communications Network***

The five-year contract with Ardicom Ltd. to use the Digital Communication Network expires in 2001. To ensure that the Government of the Northwest Territories is receiving value for money it is imperative that a review of the contract occurs prior to its renewal.

As the anchor tenant, the Department of Education, Culture and Employment contributes a significant portion of the funding that supports the Digital Communication Network, and as such, should be vigilant in ensuring that the Government of the Northwest Territories is receiving value for money.

The Standing Committee on Social Programs has requested that the Standing Committee on Accountability and Oversight recommend the Financial Management Board Secretariat in conjunction with the Department of Education, Culture and Employment and Department of Health and Social Services conduct a review of the Digital Communications Network.

And further, that this review examines the adequacy, affordability and future requirements of the Government of the Northwest Territories in determining whether the contract should be renewed, modified or re-tendered.

***Reductions to Income Support***

Committee Members are extremely concerned about the projected $1.0 million dollar reduction to the budget of the Income Support task. Committee Members cannot rationalize savings of $800,000.00 just because the Department has computerized the Income Support Program in all communities and is providing better staff training. The Committee feels that the Department may be overly optimistic in their projected cost savings.

The Committee has even greater misgivings about the projected savings of $200,000.00 because the development of Career Action Plans for income support clients will lead to employment and increased self-sufficiency.

Committee Members would like to point out that without marketable employment skills the chances of income support clients gaining meaningful employment is restricted, especially in the smaller communities where there are no jobs. It must also be pointed out that without the anticipated training dollars from the Federal Government many of the income support clients up and down the valley will not have the necessary skills to benefit from increased oil and gas activity. The Committee has seen no empirical evidence that employment numbers are on the rise for chronic income support clients. Again, the Standing Committee feels that the Department is being overly optimistic.

There are other issues, beside the Department's overly optimistic projected program savings that concern the Members of the Standing Committee on Social Programs.

Members note that the food basket price has only been adjusted upward 8% since 1992. This doesn't even keep pace with inflation. Previous reductions to the income support program, particularly in what single people are allowed for rent, has significantly increased the number of homeless people in Yellowknife. The Salvation Army is feeding more people than it ever has. Members are aware that as many as 300 people are lining up every two weeks at the Yellowknife Food Bank and that across Canada cuts to social programs have led to a doubling in the number of people visiting Food Banks since 1989.

The Department cannot expect income support clients to be able to make the required productive choices if they or their children are hungry.

The downloading of responsibility for the disenfranchised poor cannot continue. Non-Governmental Organization's resources are stretched to the limit. It appears that more and more people will fall through the cracks in the Income Support Program given the over-zealous application of eligibility criteria and the computerization of the application process. These people who fall through the cracks may be able to find assistance from Non-Governmental Organizations in the larger communities, but people in dire straits in the smaller communities do not have any options. This must be considered in the delivery of the Income Support Program.

Members are also concerned that the Income Support Program is at cross-purposes with Early Childhood Development. It is noted that if you have two children under the age of six, staying at home with them is considered a productive choice. However, if you only have one child between the ages of four and six, staying at home is not considered a productive choice. Committee Members believe that this policy is unfair to single parents of one child. It robs the child of the love, care and nurturing that a parent can provide between the ages of four and six and contradicts the principles of Early Childhood Development. Committee Members also believe that this policy could lead to poor choices on the part of some single mothers, who may become pregnant out of desperation, in order to stay on income support.

Committee Members believe that it is time to make a modest re-investment in the Income Support Program and cannot at this time support any reductions to the program.

***Aboriginal Languages Strategy***

The Committee notes that this Strategy s approximately six months behind previous estimates for implementation of the first phase. The Standing Committee looks forward to being supplied information on the first phase of the Aboriginal Languages Strategy in the near future. Committee Members would like to reinforce the need for coordination of the Aboriginal Languages Strategy with the Language Commissioner and the language communities. The Committee will be looking for evidence of this coordination in the information provided on the implementation of phase one of the Aboriginal Languages Strategy.

***Department Targets***

Committee Members note that a number of targets set by the Department are not as high as they should be. The number of northern teachers attaining a degree, should be higher than the ten the Department estimates.

The number of students enrolled in the Student North Apprenticeship Program (SNAP) should also be higher than the forty the Department anticipates. There should also be an increase in the number of SNAP participants who are able to challenge the first year of an apprenticeship on graduation from high school. The number of residents involved in Training and Occupational Courses (TOC) should be higher than the thirty the Department estimates. The Committee believes that the Department has set targets that are easily attainable without any effort or innovation required on the part of officials. Sometimes your reach should exceed your grasp.

The Committee does not question the figures that the Department presents. What the Members are questioning is the apparent emphasis on maintaining the status quo on the numbers of participants in the aforementioned programs. These are all worthwhile programs that require promotion by the Department and increased uptake by the residents of the Northwest Territories.

On a related issue, Members believe that curriculum standards for high school students are too low for students to successfully move through the SNAP program. Members have heard that this holds particularly true for math courses. Also, some Committee Members must question the ability of smaller communities to deliver grade extensions in the absence of proper teaching materials and supports for students. Limited opportunities exist for students in the communities to receive the same education as is available in the larger centres.

The Department and the Boards must make an effort to identify and support those students in the communities who desire a senior matriculation diploma. Committee Members feel strongly that many of the brighter students in the communities are falling through the cracks and need better supports.

***Student Needs Assessment***

Members note that the numbers provided in the Business Plan on student needs are vague. The Committee looks forward to better understanding once they have been provided with a copy of the Final Report on the Student Needs Assessment. Members are very concerned, however that the Department does not anticipate meeting the needs of some students until the year 2004. This is not acceptable to Committee Members and the Department is encouraged to do what it can to speed up the implementation of student assistance programs.

***Children's Initiatives***

Committee Members are very concerned about the apparent lack of coordination between the Departments and the number of ongoing or incomplete strategies that relate to children. In the Department of Education, Culture and Employment's response to the Committee's request for further information it was

stated that the Early Childhood Development Action Plan would be completed by January 15, 2001. Yet, in the response from the Department of Health and Social Services it was stated that the consultation process would be slowed and that some organizations would not be consulted on the Early Childhood Development Action Plan until there is further Cabinet direction and an indication of available funding.

While it is realized that the "Action Plan" is in its earliest stages of development, Committee Members get no sense of "common purpose" from the Departments involved. When, and if the funding comes available from the Federal Government to implement this program, the Standing Committee on Social Programs expects to see greater evidence of cooperation between the Department of Health and Social Services and the Department of Education, Culture and Employment.

Members of the Standing Committee must question the ability of the Department of Education, Culture and Employment to deliver on its commitment to have the Action Plan ready for January 15th, 2001 when its major partner has slowed or stopped its consultation process.

***Northwest Territories Literacy Strategy***

The Members of the Standing Committee on Social Programs are of the opinion that the Department is rushing the process on the development of a Literacy Strategy because of their failure to begin consultation prior to September. Committee Members are aware that the Northwest Territories Literacy Council refused in September to undertake the consultation process on behalf of the Department because of concern that there would not be adequate time for consultation prior to the November 30, 2000 deadline.

It was also noted that community consultation meetings were heavily advertised in the South Slave and that the MLAs in Yellowknife were not aware of any such consultation meetings in Yellowknife at the time of the Business Plan review. A meeting was held in Yellowknife the week of October 23rd, 2000.

Committee Members are very concerned that the process is now being rushed to meet the November 30th deadline that was imposed by the Motion made in the Legislative Assembly.

Committee Members recommend that the "Final Report" be sent out for one more round of consultation subsequent to November 30th, 2000 before it is finalized.

***Human Resource Committee on Non-Renewable Resource Employment***

The Committee is disappointed that this Committee will not be up and running until after the November Symposium in Inuvik with the Aboriginal Pipeline Group. Members believe that this puts the groups involved with this Committee behind the eight-ball and that hard work by all parties will be required to get the Committee up to speed in time to reap the benefits of the winter drilling programs. The Standing Committee will be monitoring and hoping that significant progress can be made at the November Symposium.

Members would also like to point out that the $500,000.00 that is available for training will only provide instruction in truck driving and oil field safety. There is no training that will provide stable long-term employment. The Department must also focus on the need for long-term employment in any training programs it develops with the anticipated increased federal funding.

***A Human Resource Development Proposal related to Non-Renewable Resources in the Northwest Territories***

Members note that this Strategy is being presented as part of Business Plan when it is actually a "wish list" item and should be presented as such.

Members would like to see the Proposal be very clear on which elements are presently funded and which are contingent on further funding and how all of the funding will be utilized.

Committee Members can see no evidence that this Proposal is not concentrated on short-term entry-level jobs. The desire to use "Just-in-Time" entry-level training to prepare the residents of the Northwest Territories for employment in the oil and gas industry will require a unprecedented level of cooperation and planning between the Department and industry. Committee Members hope that the Department is up to the task and that opportunities are not squandered because of poor planning or the Department failing to hold up their end. Members desire to see evidence that the Proposal will try and provide the necessary training to ensure that as many of the long-term technical jobs go to northerners. Rough calculations made by Committee Members indicate that an average of $3,200.00 will be spent on training each participant. This reconfirms the Committee's belief that the training dollars will be concentrated on short-term opportunities and that long-term employment opportunity for northerners may be squandered.

There is a concern whether the consultants mentioned in the Proposal will be northerners or not. There is also the concern on the part of Committee Members that the Department is not doing enough to promote apprenticeship as a viable career path to high school students and other residents. Committee Members could see no evidence of promotion of apprenticeships in the Proposal.

***Maximizing Northern Employment***

Committee Members are unsure of the linkages to other departmental employment strategies, such as the Human Resource Proposal related to Non-Renewable Resources in the Northwest Territories. The details were not present in the Business Plan for the Members to make fair comment on the Maximizing Northern Employment Strategy. It is a nice "wish list" contingent on federal funding and Members of the Standing Committee look forward to further information on the program in the future.

***Forced Growth***

The Standing Committee notes that other than listing forced growth required by Amendments to the *Education Act*, the Department of Education, Culture and Employment did not provide any numbers on forced growth for the second and third year of the Business Plan. It was learned during the review of another Department in the Social Envelope that this was on the instruction of the Financial Management Board Secretariat.

The lack of any forced growth projections for the second and third year of the Business Plan causes the Committee to question whether there is any meaningful forward planning going on in the Department. For example can the education facilities in Delta and the Deh Cho handle the projected economic boom in the areas? The Committee is awaiting information from the Department on the capacity of the education system in Inuvik.

It is important to note that the Business Plans are planning documents. Ignoring forced growth, as an issue will not mean that it goes away. Members deserve to be kept informed as to the best case and worst case scenarios affecting the Department.

***Student Financial Assistance Program***

Members of the Standing Committee on Social Programs remain adamant that the Department of Education, Culture and Employment has reneged on the commitments that it made to students who were eligible under the old Student Financial Assistance Program. It is not a question of available fiscal resources, as the Minister maintains. It is a question of fairness and whether an individual can trust the promises of a government that were made and accepted in good faith.

The Committee questions the figures that the Department has presented on the number of students affected and the cost to the Department and has sought clarification from the Minister under separate cover.

Another area of concern for Members of the Standing Committee is that there is no planning by the Department to devolve the administration of the Student Financial Assistance Program to at least the regional level. It is a reality that responsibility for post-secondary education will be part of most self-government agreements. The Department must consider devolving the Student Financial Assistance Program from Headquarters.

Finally, Members of the Committee note that as yet they have not seen a plan on how Distance Education will be dealt with under the new Student Financial Assistance Program. Members look forward to reviewing such a plan in the near future.

***Informatics Plan***

The Standing Committee on Social Programs looks forward to more information and usage of the Labour Market Database. Committee Members are aware that a significant amount has been spent on various systems designed to compile labour market information over the years. It is hoped that this "new" database will lead to a true understanding of the labour market requirements in all regions of the Northwest Territories will lead to better usage of our limited training dollars. The Members of the Committee will be interested in how the Department manages to link all of the schools and boards so that they may utilize the information that the Labour Market Database contains. It is important that educators and career counselors have access to current information to impart to students and residents of the Northwest Territories so that they can make the best career decisions possible.

***Distance Learning Opportunities***

Members of the Standing Committee on Social Programs do support the efforts of the Department to offer distance learning courses to students in secondary schools in the Northwest Territories. However, for the program to be successful the students must be supported at the local level. They must have access to computers, at reasonable times and have a clear connection with the service provider. They must have trained teachers whom, in addition to helping with hardware and software problems can provide academic supports. If one of these links fails, the entire chain is broken and the student is likely to have problems or fail. Committee Members noted that without the aforementioned supports, distance learning could be likened to "plunking a child in front of the television set and hoping that they learn". The Members will be interested to see the results of distance education and the success rates of students to gauge the value of the program.

## The Northwest Territories Housing Corporation

The Standing Committee on Social Programs met with the Minister and his officials on October 19th, 2000. The discussions on the Business Plan of the Northwest Territories were wide-ranging and dealt with a myriad of issues both in and out of the Corporation's Business Plan. The Committee would like to thank the Minister and his officials for their candor and openness. The Committee made note of the following concerns:

***Program and Function Review***

The Standing Committee on Social Programs must question whether there is any meaningful analysis taking place on the proposed merger between the Department of Municipal and Community Affairs and the Northwest Territories Housing Corporation. The Minister's states that it is necessary to keep the NWT Housing Corporation as a "shell corporation" in order to flow money from the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation and to reinvest profit from sales into social housing rather than returning to the consolidated revenue fund.
Members cannot see why senior staff in the NWT Housing Corporation or the Department of Municipal and Community Affairs would attach any significant resources to analyzing the proposed merger of the two Departments given the stated opinion of the Minister responsible for both Departments.
Committee Members would like to point out to the Government that in any possible "future" department amalgamations it might not be appropriate or desirable for the Minister in charge of both Departments to be leading the analysis.

***Marketing of NWT Housing Products***

Members of the Standing Committee on Social Programs have been encouraged by the work of the Northwest Territories Housing Corporation in marketing northern manufacturers and suppliers outside of Canada. The work the Corporation has done in creating a market for NWT products and services in Alaska is to be commended an encouraged.

That being said the Standing Committee on Social Programs is very concerned with the proposed transfer of the marketing of NWT housing products and services to the Northwest Territories Development Corporation. Given the track record of the Northwest Territories Development Corporation in the past and the enormous potential for NWT suppliers and services in Alaska, there is no confidence on the part of Committee Members that the Development Corporation would be up to the task. Member approval of this part of the program and function review will depend on the redesign of the marketing function within the Department of Resources, Wildlife and Economic Development and the Members confidence in the aforesaid redesign.

***Energy Wall and Building Products Ltd.***

The Committee again notes the lack of marketing assistance provided by the Northwest Territories Housing Corporation to this northern based manufacturer. It is especially frustrating for the Committee Members to note that this same company that cannot get any support from the NWT Housing Corporation in marketing its products, has had a substantial investment made by the Department of Resources, Wildlife and Economic Development. When the Committee considers this example, Members question whether it might be more appropriate to have RWED do the marketing.

***Housing Stock Condition in the Communities***

Members note the poor condition of privately owned housing in some communities. In some of these cases the Housing Corporation is not without blame. The poor condition of some housing started with the initial poor construction and the subsequent inspection process that the Housing Corporation used. In approving this poor construction for housing built under various housing programs the Housing Corporation bears some responsibility. Members note that in most cases it is cheaper to re-mediate than rebuild. Committee Members believe that the Housing Corporation must put more focus on private home repairs, especially for those trying to fix problems caused by poor initial construction.

Members point to the bat infestation in the attics of homes in Kakisa as an example of the consequences of poor initial construction. Now, there is not only the issue of poor initial construction there is also a danger to the resident's health and well being.

***Human Resources***

As with other Departments the Members of the Standing Committee notes the need for the Corporation to incorporate the number of exit interviews; the number of completed performance appraisals, the number of transfer assignments and the number of direct appointments. Committee Members also believe that the Staff Morale goal of the Corporation is a good one, but needs a process to judge the effectiveness of the Corporation in meeting that goal.

The Committee noted the information provided by the NWTHC subsequent to our meetings and looks forward to an integrated Human Resource Plan at our next review.

## *Senior's Housing Strategy*

There is a clear level of frustration with the Department of Health and Social Services on the lack of inter-departmental consultation on the part of the Northwest Territories Housing Corporation in setting the placement of independent senior's housing for the next three years.

The Committee, try as it might, could not reconcile the statement made by the Minister that the Corporation was now cooperating with the Department of Health and Social Services, with the reality that senior's independent housing has been allocated for the next three years. Members of the Committee would like to point out that there is no opportunity for consultation with the Department of Health and Social Services on the placement of senior's independent housing for the next three years. There will be no cooperation on placement until 2004/2005. Members are very disappointed in the inability of the two Department to work together.

There is a definite need to consider the information contained in the Housing Needs Survey conducted by the NWT Housing Corporation in conjunction with the information on healthcare status that can be provided by the Health and Social Service Boards. Without this cooperation, Committee Members are convinced that no true understanding of community needs for senior's housing can be realized. For example the Housing Needs Survey can indicate that there are twenty seniors requiring housing in a community.

However, without the input from the Health Board that ten of these seniors would not be suitable candidates for independent senior's housing in one or two years Committee Members must question how relevant planning can take place.

## *Cooperation Between Ministers in the Social Envelope*

Members of the Standing Committee on Social Programs were shocked to hear from Minister Allen that there have been no meetings as of the October 19th, 2000 between the Ministers of the Social Programs Departments on the Senior's Initiative. This contradicts impressions of cooperation that the Members of the Committee got from the other Ministers. The Members of the Standing Committee thank the Minister for his candor in admitting this.

Equally shocking to Committee Members was the admission by the Minister that because the Ministers had not met as the social programs group everyone (meaning the departments) "are all working independently to meet the same objectives."

In addition, the role of the Minister Responsible for Senior's is so unclear that the Minister Responsible for the Northwest Territories Housing Corporation asked the Standing Committee what they thought the role of the Minister Responsible for Senior's should be.

Members of the Standing Committee on Social Programs are extremely concerned about this Government's goal of bundling services for seniors and providing a single point of contact to the system given the apparent lack of cooperation going on between the Departments that are involved.

***Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation Funding***

The Standing Committee was pleased to hear that the Federal Minister attended the meeting of the Provincial/Territorial Housing Ministers for the first time in six years. Although Members are disappointed that the Federal Minister will not revisit any previous CMHC programs that provided Operations and Maintenance funding, it is encouraging that the Federal Minister did no rule out funding new construction of social housing.

Members would like to encourage the Minister to cooperate with his provincial and territorial counterparts in lobbying the Federal Minister for increased funding for social housing. It is important to stipulate that this lobbying should be for social housing funding based on need rather than a per capita formula allocation.

***Linking of District Offices and the Local Housing Authorities through a Wide Area Network***

Committee Members appreciated being supplied with the implementation schedule for this plan. There are concerns that the Housing Corporation may have problems implementing the Wide Area Network given previously identified capacity problems with the Digital Communication Network. Members hope that their fears are unfounded.

***Strategies and Initiatives***

The Committee would like to point out that many of the strategies and initiatives that the Corporation has listed in its Business Plan are actually internal operating policies. For the Committee to consider an item to be a Strategy or an Initiative it is held that there should be fiscal resources attached to implementation or ongoing work. Although the Committee is not averse to reviewing the Corporation's internal working policies, they should be presented as an appendix to the Business Plan.

***Energy Conservation Policy***

The Committee was pleased to see the Energy Conservation Strategy back in the Business Plan after its being missing from the last Business Plan. However, Committee Members believe that the Corporation has a lot more work to do to have a "true" Energy Conservation Policy".

From discussions with the President it is apparent that the Energy Conservation Strategy is spread throughout the programs and services offered by the Housing Corporation. There is no one place or document a person can go to find out about the Housing Corporation's Energy Conservation Strategy. Committee Members see a need to consolidate the Strategy in one place and to place a greater emphasis on the Strategy given the ever-increasing cost of utilities. Members also recall that previous Energy Conservation Strategies concentrated on utilities and appliances. There is a need to ensure that construction standards for energy conservation are included in the policy.

***Joint Ventures with Aboriginal Development Corporations***

Members note that this is a productive way for the Housing Corporation to work with communities to meet immediate housing needs. The Committee was also pleased to hear that the Corporation is developing a legal framework that will outline the responsibilities for each party involved in a joint venture.

The Committee does believe that the Housing Corporation must exercise caution in entering into joint ventures. It must be recognized that this type of program favours those communities with the ability to contribute. Those communities that cannot will have to wait until their funding is actually in place. This could in Committee minds breed some resentment between have and have not communities.

***Harmonization Strategy***

Members look forward to reviewing the Harmonization Strategy in the very near future. The integration of income support and public housing should help to reduce some of the perceived problems with both programs.